

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Communicable Disease Control

Tularemia

What is tularemia?

Tularemia is a bacterial disease associated with both animals and man. Although many wild and domestic animals have been infected, the rabbit is most often involved in disease outbreaks.

Who gets tularemia?

Hunters or other people who spend a great deal of time out of doors are at greater risk of exposure to tularemia than people with other occupational or recreational interests.

How is tularemia spread?

Many routes of human exposure to the tularemia germ are known to exist. The common routes include: inoculation of the skin or mucous membranes with blood or tissue while handling infected animals; contact with fluids from infected flies or ticks; or handling or eating insufficiently cooked rabbit meat. Less common means of spread are: drinking contaminated water; inhaling dust from contaminated soil; or handling contaminated pelts or paws of animals.

What are the symptoms of tularemia?

Tularemia is usually recognized by the presence of a lesion and swollen glands. Ingestion of the organism may produce a throat infection, intestinal pain diarrhea and vomiting. Inhalation of the organism may produce a fever alone or combined with a pneumonia-like illness.

How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms generally appear between two and 10 days, but usually after three days.

What is the treatment for tularemia?

Certain antibiotics are effective in treating tularemia.

Does past infection with tularemia make a person immune?

Long term immunity will follow recovery from tularemia, however, reinfection has been reported.

What can be done to prevent the spread of tularemia?

Rubber gloves should be worn when skinning or handling animals, especially rabbits. Wild rabbit and rodent meat should be cooked thoroughly before eating. Avoid bites of flies, mosquitoes and ticks and avoid drinking, bathing, swimming or working in untreated water.